

by JESUS CHRIST  
ASSERTED and VINDICATED,  
AND THE  
Objections made against it by some  
Modern Unbelievers,  
Particularly by the AUTHOR of  
*Christianity as Old as the Creation,*  
Fully Considered and Answered:  
IN  
Two SERMONS

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

*Jan. 2, and Jan. 6, 1731-2.*

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By THO. COCKMAN, D. D. Master of  
*University-College in Oxford.*

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The FOURTH EDITION.

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TO THE  
Younger STUDENTS  
IN THE  
Two UNIVERSITIES, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

**A**S these Discourses, when first drawn up in Private, were writ with a View of their being servicable to some of you, who were expected to be the Hearers of them; so, now that they are made Publick, I have taken the Liberty of addressing them to you all, with a like View of their being serviceable to all such, as shall please to read them, and consider them with that Attention which the Weight of the Subject requires.

You are now just entering, Gentlemen, upon the Journey of Publick Life, and your Happiness and Success in it, with Regard both to this and another World, will in great measure depend upon your setting out right at first, that is, in the Ways of true Virtue and Religion, which alone can effectually bring you to an happy End of it, and render you a Blessing and an Honour to Yourself, your Families, your Country, and your Religion here, and make you everlastingly happy in a Life to come hereafter.

You cannot but be sensible, Gentlemen, that there is at this Time a Set of People in the World (and particularly amongst ourselves) who are endeavouring to

## D E D I C A T I O N.

*turn you aside from those Ways, and lead you into the crooked ones of Vice and Irreligion; to serve what Ends, except the awkward Pleasure of drawing Disciples after them, and defending themselves with Numbers, I confess I cannot imagine.*

*At the Head of these is the Publisher of a late Book intitled Christianity as Old as the Creation, who with much Malice, little Sense, and less good Reasoning, has laid himself forth against all Religion, but especially against the Christian, which he is pleased to decry under the ingenious Appellations of Enthusiasm, Priestcraft, Bigottry, Superstition, nay, and a Load and intolerable Burden of Superstition, and other suchlike Names, qualia vulgò jactantur a vilissimo quoque, as Quintilian expresses it.*

*You, Gentlemen, have the Happiness of a liberal Education, and can easily distinguish between Out-cry and Reasoning, between calling Ill-names like the Vulgar, and producing Arguments like an impartial Thinker: And you know the Difference between that which accidentally sometimes attends a Thing, and that which necessarily arises from the Nature and Constitution of it. A Man may call the Law of England (if he is allowed against that the same Liberty as this Author has taken against Christianity) by the like hard Names of Cheating, Roguery, Pocket-picking, a piece of Craft of Lawyers, which is attended with incredible Mischiefs, and has impoverished and ruined a great Number of Families; and may tip his Declamation too (as this Author has done) with a tantum potuit suadere malorum. But it would easily be answered, That such Complaints are for the most Part ill grounded and downright Falshoods; and when there is any Truth in them, they are taken from Evils which only accidentally attend the Law; and therefore cannot with any Justice be charged upon the Thing itself, but only upon the ill Use which some foolishly or perversely may have*



## D E D I C A T I O N.

*have made of it: The Law may be very good, and yet in some Cases it may be used unjustly.*

*It will perhaps be pleaded in the Behalf of this Author; That how-much-soever he may have abused Religion, and the Christian in particular, yet he speaks very finely in Praise of Virtue and the Charms and Beauties of it; and has set the Law of Nature, and the Obligations which Men are under to observe it's Precepts, in a clear and perfect Light. This may be true, Gentlemen, and yet very little to the Purpose: The like Plea was made heretofore for his admired Fore-runner Epicurus, as we learn from Tully; to which that great Author very justly answers, That so Caius Gracchus, at the same Time that he was ruining the publick Treasury, made fine Harangues about the prudent Management of it: But there is a wide Difference between Pretences and Realities: Quid verba audiam (says he) cum facta videam? I do not affirm, that the Commendations given by this Writer to Virtue and the Law of Nature, are no better than meer Pretences: But I will venture to say, that (like those whose Intention it is to deceive) versatur in universalibus, and neither tells you distinctly what that Virtue is, whose Charms he commends, nor what those Duties are, which the Law of Nature requires of us, from the Consideration of the Natures of God and Man, and from the Relation which we stand in to Him and to one another: Ita rem involvit, ut vix ejus mens percipiatur, as one of the Schoolmen says upon a like Occasion. I should be glad to know therefore a little more explicitly of him, what those Duties are which (according to his Scheme) we ought, as Creatures, to pay to the Supreme Being; what those which are required of us from the Consideration of our own Nature; and what from that Relation which we stand in to one another: And more particularly, whether Prayers, and Praises, and Thanksgivings (either publick*

Tusc.  
Quæst.  
Lib. iii.  
§ 83.

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publick or private) to Almighty God, as the Creator, Supporter, and Governour of the World, &c. be any Part of the former; whether egregious Fornication, and indulging warm Desires in the unbridled Use of Women, be consistent with the Second; and whether procuring a Crime, which a Man was guilty of himself, to be charged upon another Person, be agreeable to that Justice or that Benevolence which is required between Man and Man by the Third. When he shall think fit to come out of his Cloud, and shew himself clearly as to these and the like Particulars, you will be able to judge, Gentlemen, what he means by Virtue and the Obligations of the Law of Nature: But till that Time I would have you remember, that there was even in St Paul's Days a Set of Men in the World, who served not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own Bellies; and yet by good Words and fair Speeches deceived the Hearts of the Simple.

His declaiming against the Clergy (which he does with the utmost Malice) is apparently intended to set the People against those, who are appointed to instruct them in the Ways of Virtue and Religion, and thereby to promote Order and Regularity in human Society.

His Abuses and Misrepresentations of the Sacred Writings are visibly calculated for the same End, viz. to beget in Mens Minds a contemptible Opinion of those lively Oracles; and thereby to prevent their being so profitable to them for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, as they certainly will be, if Men receive them with that Reverence which they ought to do.

As to his Freedom and Impartiality of Thinking, which he so often boasts of, this is only an Affectation of thinking out of the Way of vulgar Understandings; and an artful Insinuation, as if those who thought otherwise than he does, had not a Freedom of Judgment, but must be influenced by Prejudice, or hindered by some  
Restraint.



**Restraint.** But these are little Artifices, which no prudent Person will be deceived by: The Man that can travel safely, without Lett or Hindrance, in the Road that leads directly to his Journey's End, is undisputably free; but if some People will, when there is no Occasion for it, be continually leaping over Hedges and Ditches to the Hazard of their Necks, and for that Reason call themselves the only free Men, because they do not confine themselves to the common Road, there is no Help for it: This may be Freedom for ought I know, but I will venture to affirm that it is the Freedom of Fools: A wise Man knows himself to be abundantly free, when he has the Ground to walk upon, without any Hazard, whithersoever he pleases; whereas a foolish Boy thinks himself under sad Restraint, if he may not walk in Stilts, and climb up to Places where he is perpetually in Danger of falling.

But I am not concerned in the following Discourses with any of these Parts of our Author's huge Performance, which have been and will be fully considered and answered by much better Hands. All that I propose is, To explain the Nature of our Christian Salvation, which this Author is pleased to object against; and to vindicate our Belief of it in point of human Reason and the Nature of Things; and to shew the Groundlessness of those pretended Arguments, which with great Confidence, and greater Ignorance, have been produced against it by this unbelieving Writer; and which with great Industry, and no less triumphing against Christianity, have been dispersed and propagated through a great Part of the Nation by his deluded Followers, such as desire to encourage themselves and others in Looseness of Principles and Licentiousness of Practice. If I succeed in this Design, and can convince any unprejudiced and impartial Thinkers of the Unreasonableness of Infidelity, and the Folly of running headlong into the fashionable Errors of it, and speaking evil  
of

# DEDICATION

of that Religion which they know nothing of, as this Author has done; I shall have my End: If not, I must content myself with having born my Testimony to what I am convinced is the Truth, and sit down with the Satisfaction of having contributed my poor Endeavours, towards retrieving a corrupt Age from that Wickedness and Irreligion with which it is so miserably overspread, and of having shewn with how much Heartiness and Sincerity I am,

**Dear GENTLEMEN,**

**Your most Affectionate Friend,**

**Univ. Coll. Oxon,  
May 4, 1732.**

**and Humble Servant,**

**THO. COCKMAN,**



A C T S iv. 12.

*Neither is there Salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under Heaven given among Men whereby we must be saved.*

**T**H E Person here spoken of, *as the only Author of Salvation to us*, is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, (as appears from the 10th Verse of this Chapter ; ) and the Words are Part of one of the first Discourses, that were made upon the Subject of the Christian Religion, soon after the Resurrection and Ascension of our blessed Saviour. What the Occasion of them was, is sufficiently plain from the foregoing Chapter, and the preceeding Verses of this. They contain in them in Substance two Things, one of which is supposed, and the other expressly asserted: The Thing supposed is, That *we* (by which I understand all Mankind) were by some Means or other involved in such Circumstances, as that we stood in need of being *saved out of them*: And the Thing asserted is, That *such Salvation* is no otherwise to be had, than only through the Merit or Procurement of Jesus Christ, there being *none other Name under Heaven given among Men whereby we must be saved.*

What I design at present from the Words is, to give some Account of the Nature of that Salvation, *for which* (as we profess in one of our *Creeeds* to believe) our Blessed Saviour *came down from Heaven*, and was *incarnate*, and *suffered Death* upon the Cross, in our Nature ; and to vindicate the Reasonableness of such our Belief from the Objections made against

it by the Infidels of our Times, *Men of corrupt Minds, Reprobate concerning the Faith, turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, and denying* (if not *the only Lord God himself*, yet however) our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and more particularly from the Cavils of a late unbelieving Writer, who under the *sham Pretence* of asserting the Antiquity of the Christian Religion, and proving it as *Old as the Creation*, has made it his real Endeavour with the utmost Malice to vilify and explode it. In the further Prosecution of this Argument, I shall reduce what I have to offer under the Three following Heads.

I. *First*, I shall endeavour to settle the right Notion of that Christian Salvation, which is here asserted to be *in Christ Jesus only*, and shew how Mankind came to stand in Need of it.

II. *Secondly*, I shall shew, That it is no otherwise attainable than only through Christ Jesus, and in virtue of his attoning and interceeding for us, and endeavour to explain the *Reasonableness* of this Doctrine.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall endeavour to answer the Objections which are usually made against it by our modern Unbelievers, and especially by the fore-mentioned Writer; which will further illustrate the Justice of God's Proceedings in this whole Dispensation, and shew the Reasonableness of our believing and practising upon this great Article of our Christian Faith.

I. *First*, I am to endeavour to settle the right Notion of that Christian Salvation, which is here asserted to be *in Christ Jesus only*. *Salvation*, or being saved (as every one knows) not only in Scripture, but



but in common and ordinary Language, has always a relation to some Evil or Calamity, which the Party is said to be delivered or saved out of. And accordingly as Evils are of different kinds, some temporal, and others spiritual; some affecting our Bodies or outward Circumstances, and others our Souls and their everlasting State; so a Person's Deliverance from any one of these, may be, and often is, expressed by his being *saved* from it: Thus Men may be *saved* from bodily Distempers, as well as from Sin and Death; and God is said to have *saved* his People *Israel* out of the Land of *Egypt*, as well as to save Men from the Wrath to come. And indeed some Writers of no small Note understand St *Peter* here in the former of these Senses, as if he had only said, *And such Salvation as this which you have seen*, in this impotent Man's being thus delivered from his Lameness, is not to be had by any other but by Christ Jesus only, there being no other Name under Heaven by which Men can be saved *after such a Manner*. Whether the Apostle meant no more than this by the Expressions of the Text, as I am far from affirming, so I can hardly think it worth the while to dispute; since however his Meaning may be restrained in this Place, there are many other Passages (and indeed *the whole Tenour of the New Testament*,) in which Man's Salvation, viz. his *eternal Salvation from Sin and Death*, is peculiarly ascribed to our Saviour as the Author of it, and the Doctrine was never yet denied by any Christian; so that we need not be solicitous about proving it from the *Text* itself; and it will be sufficient for us to explain the Nature of that *eternal Salvation*, which we profess to believe he came from Heaven to purchase for us, and that State of Evil which by his Means we are saved from,

In order hereunto give me leave to observe to you,  
That Man (the proper Subject of the Salvation here

spoken of) as he stands in relation to Almighty God, may be considered by us under two different Lights, viz. 1<sup>st</sup>, *That of a Creature*, designed, ordained, and made by God, after such and such a Nature; endowed with such and such Faculties and Powers as were originally conceived in the *Divine Understanding*, and approved of and ordered by the *Divine Will*, before they had an actual Existence by Creation: Or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, *That of a sinful and degenerate Creature* which by it's own Fault and the ill Use of those Faculties, had fallen from the original Perfection of Nature which was first given to it, and thereby displeased and offended that God who was the Author of that Nature, as being no longer the same Creature which he at first designed and made it.

If we consider Man under the former of these Lights, we cannot but believe (as all the World have done before us) that he was *innocent*, and *uncorrupt*, and *perfect in his Kind*, and in *that Place which he was to hold in the Rank of Beings*, as he came originally out of the Hands of his Creator; it being absolutely unconceiveable that an infinitely *holy*, and *pure*, and *perfect* Being (such as all the World who profess to believe a God, have always acknowledged Him to be) should produce a Creature altogether repugnant to, and inconsistent with, the Properties and Attributes of his own Nature: For this would plainly be as absurd and as repugnant to the Nature and Reason of Things, as for Light to produce Darkness, for the Vine to bring forth the Fruit of the Thorn, or the Fig-tree that of the Thistle. If this *were* so, the Divine Artificer must either have wanted *Wisdom* to contrive his Work, or *Goodness* to desire it, or *Power* to execute what he had contrived and desired, after a better Manner: But no Man's Reason will give him leave to believe this, or any

Part



Part of it, concerning a *Being*, who is on all hands confessed to be of *infinite Wisdom* to contrive, of *infinite Goodness* to desire, and of *infinite Power* to execute, every thing for the best. We must lay it down therefore as a Fundamental Truth, which *natural Reason proceeding from clear Ideas* (as this Author expresses it) *of the Character of the Divine Being*, as well as Holy Scripture, assures us of, *That Man was originally created with an upright and perfect Nature*. And as every Artist who produces a Piece of Work, in the Nature of the Thing must be supposed to desire, that his Work should answer all those Ends and Purposes for which it was fitted and intended: And as all other Creatures, both animate and inanimate, had Laws given to them proportioned to their respective Natures, by which God *willed* them to act after such a Manner as was fit and proper for them in their respective Stations; so when he made Man after such a particular Nature, gave him an understanding Soul to direct him in the right Way, and Freedom of Will to chuse the Good and refuse the Evil, or (as *Moses* expresses it) *created him after his own Image and Likeness*; we cannot but think it to have been the *Will* of God (not *arbitrary* and *tyrannical Will*, as this Author almost every where speaks, but a *Will* that always steers itself by the Rules of perfect and unerring Reason :) I say, we cannot but think it to have been the *Will of God*, and consequently a *Law to Man*, that he, as well as other Creatures, should act after such a Manner as was *fitting, proper, and congruous* to that Nature which God had bestowed upon him. And the Obligation laid upon Man at the Beginning by the Will of his Creator to behave himself according to the *Dignity of his Nature*, and to the *Fitnesses, Congruities, or Reasons* of Things, is what I understand by the *Law*, or (if you please) the *Religion of Nature*.  
And

And this Law of Nature I imagine to receive its obliging Force, not barely from the Fitness or Agreeableness of Things as such, (which though they may *move and somewhat encline* the Will, yet can have no Power to lay an *Obligation* upon any Man;) but from the *Will* and Design of the great Author of *Nature*, who only has both *Power* and *Right* to oblige us, and who must be supposed (as was just now observed) to intend and will that Man, as well as the rest of his Creatures, should act in such a manner as was fit and suited to that reasonable Nature which he had given to him. And this *Intention and Will of God* those Fitnesses and Agreeablenesses of Things are (I imagine the proper Means of discovering to every unbiassed Understanding; so that *they result* from the Nature of Things themselves, and are at the same Time declarative of the Will of the Creator of them, and so are rather Means of promulgating to Mankind the Law of Nature, and discover to them the Will and Design of its Author, than *constitutive Parts* of the Law itself. It is *God* therefore (as this Author truly expresses it) *who plainly speaks to us by the Things themselves*, and by the Relation which Reason shews there is between them; and nothing more is required to the perfect Notion of a Law, than the *Will of the rightful Law-giver sufficiently published and made known to those who are to be directed by it*.

This Law, as it resulted immediately from human Nature as designed and created by Almighty God, so was obligatory upon Man as soon as he was created, in his original State of *Incorruption* and *Innocence*; (for had he been subject to no Law at that Time, it is evident that he could not have been guilty of any Transgression) and has continued the same *without Change or Alteration* ever since, and *does now*  
under



( 7 )  
under the Christian Dispensation, and *will continue the same* as long as human Nature lasts. For though (it is true) the State of Things is very *unhappily altered* since the first Establishment of them when the Law was made; yet that *Alteration* does not lie on the Part of the *Law itself*, or of *God* the Author of it, but of *Man* who was immediately subject to the Law, and originally enabled to know and do all that was contained in it. *Mankind* indeed (as a Right Reverend Prelate of our Church well expresses it) is *much the worse for having broken the Law of Nature*, but the *Law itself* is not the worse for having been broken and abused by him, but still remains in its *primitive Purity and Simplicity*. The Law still requires us, as it did at the Beginning, to do all that is *holy*, and *just*, and *good*, and no Jot or Tittle of it is suffered to fail under the Religion of Christ Jesus, as He himself assures us: But Man, under the present Degeneracy of his Nature (which he has fallen into by being left in the *Hands of his own Counsels*) is now become a Subject incapable of knowing and doing (by his own Strength) a great Part of it.

The Law therefore, or Religion of Nature, I will suppose to be *invariably the same* now as it was in the State of Innocence, when Man was just created after the Image of God; but the Power of knowing and doing the Things contained in it, on Man's Part not to be entirely the same. But still, though in Equity there is no Obligation to Impossibilities, yet a Law as such may retain its obliging Force, as to the *Rule or directive Part* of it, (though perhaps not as to the *Penalty or coercive Part*) though Men by *Sickness, Lunacy*, or the like (and much more by *their own Faults*) may, after the Publication of it, become incapable of paying a due Obedience to it: And accordingly this Law of God and Nature (I imagine) does still retain its *obliging Force*, though in the *Exercise of it*,

it, (through the Mercy and Grace of God) it will actually be applied to those Subjects only, *who are in, and so far as they are in*, a Possibility of knowing and doing what that Law requires of them. A Law may oblige as a Rule of Action, and yet the Subject be justly excusable and not capable of being *obliged with Effect*, through invincible *Ignorance* or other Defect which is on his Part insuperable. *As far* therefore as Mankind in general, or each individual Person in particular, is in any *Possibility, natural, or moral* of knowing and doing what the Will and Law of God and their Nature require of them, by taking Notice of those *Fitnesses or Reasons of Things*, which God has interwoven with the very Natures of them; (which was the *original Publication* of it;) or by the *Rules and Precepts* laid down in the Gospel, which this Author affirms to be a *Republication of the same*: So far they are still *effectually obliged* by that Law, and may justly have the Penalty of it (*viz. Death or Separation from the Presence of God*, and that for ever and ever) applied to them, if by any Fault or Neglect of theirs they do not behave accordingly. I say *may justly have the Penalty, viz. Death, applied to them*: For though the Religion or Law of Nature (as was just now observed from an excellent Father of our Church) is *not the worse for having been abused, but still retains its first Purity and Simplicity*; yet no body but this Writer would have inferred from hence, That consequently it must retain *it's native Efficacy to make Men happy*, even though they had abused it: As if a Law continuing in its Purity and Simplicity could be of Efficacy to make those happy, who had made themselves the contrary by being guilty of the Breach of it, and consequently being under its Condemnation, by living either in a supine Negligence, or an avowed Transgression of the Precepts of it.

Page 281.



Had Man indeed continued to live in due Obedience to the Law of his Nature and Reason, he would have continued to be such as God originally designed and made him; and consequently would have continued to be approved and accepted by Him; it being impossible to conceive that He should create any Being which He did not approve of; or that He should reject or despise the very Work of his own Hand, so long as it continued to be the very same as He intended it. Man in this Case, *had he fulfilled and lived up to the Law of his perfect Nature*, would have needed no *Salvation*; since he would have had no Evil, either of Sin or Punishment, which he would have wanted to be *saved* from: But by transgressing the Law, he drew down Evil upon himself. For every Law in the Nature of the Thing must *acquit* and *justify* in the Sight of the Law-giver those who perform all that is required by it; as every one, on the contrary, must *find guilty* and *condemn* those who transgress it's Precepts. Had Mankind therefore done the Works of the Law, they would have lived and been accepted in the sight of their Creator by those Works; and when St Paul tells us, (as he does in many Places) *That by the Works of the Law no Flesh living shall be justified*, his Meaning plainly is, *That no Flesh living have fulfilled the Works of the Law*; but all must acknowledge, when they compare their Works with the *Perfection, Holiness, and Goodness* of the Law, that in many things they have been Transgressors of it; *for by the Law* (as he expresses it) *is the Knowledge of Sin*; i. e. all Men must know and acknowledge that they have sinned: Whereas, had Men done what the Law required of them in all Points, they would certainly have lived and been saved by doing it; *The Man that doth these Things*

C

shall

shall live by them, being Part of the very Sanction of the Law itself.

The Question therefore between us and our modern Infidels, is not (as this Writer all along blunderingly supposes) *Whether God by Nature, and the Law resulting from it, had made sufficient Provision for the Happiness of Mankind?* for this was never doubted, *had Man behaved as he should have done:* But, *Whether, upon Man's having abused this sufficient Provision, and thereby forfeited his Title to that Happiness,* God was pleased of His Mercy to come to new Terms with him, and (in Consideration of some Satisfaction for past Offences, and some Conditions to be performed on Man's Part for the Time to come) to restore him again to that Happiness which he had lost?

But, 2dly, if we consider Man under the other Light mentioned, not as coming out of the Hands of his Creator infinitely wise, and powerful, and good, but as left in the Hands of his own Counsels; not as a perfect and innocent Creature, but as polluted and fallen (by his own Fault) from his native Innocence and Perfection: And, in short, not as a Keeper, but as a Transgressor of the Law of God and his own Nature; (which this Author has wholly left out in his Account) we shall find a new Scene of Things open to us. He whom God originally made upright by Nature, in a little time made himself preternaturally a Sinner; and thereby, instead of being accepted by God and continuing in his Favour, incurred the Divine Displeasure, and lost the Favour of Him with whom no Evil can dwell; and, instead of obtaining Life by doing the Things of the Law, drew upon himself Death (the Penalty of breaking the Law) by doing just the contrary. From hence there resulted a new Relation between God and Man, which



never was in the Time of Man's Innocence, and never would have been had he continued in that Innocence, *viz.* That which is between the *offended* and *offending* Parties ; and consequently new *Fitnesses*, *Reasonablenesses*, or *Congruities* of Things, arising from this new Relation, as to the Behaviour of each Party toward the other, *with Regard to forgiving and obtaining Forgiveness.* The Law was given to Man in his perfect State, *when he needed no Forgiveness* ; but the Christian Covenant was made afterward upon Occasion of his having sinned and fallen from his perfect State, and therefore *wanting to be forgiven.* But still the Christian Religion, or Method of Man's being pardoned by means of an Atonement and Intercessor, was founded as truly upon the then *present Nature and Reason of Things*, as the Law of Nature was upon the *original Constitution of them* ; and as the latter consisted in what was fit and reasonable to be done *in order to avoid Sin* ; so the former consists in what was fit and reasonable to be done both on God's Part and Man's, *in order to the purging away of Sin after it had been committed.*

It is an injurious way of proceeding in *this Writer* therefore, to represent Christianity (which he almost continually does) as an Enemy to Mens following the *Light of Nature and Reason* : Whereas it requires Men (on the contrary) to adhere to that Light, so far as it can possibly be a *sufficient Guide* to them, or of any Service to their Happiness. But, supposing Men, either through Ignorance or Perverseness, to have acted contrary to this Guide, and thereby made themselves Sinners ; it is evident that the *Light of Reason* can neither pardon their Sins, nor ascertain to them the Conditions upon which God, the *offended* Party, will be pleased to pardon them : So that for both these they must have recourse to something else, *viz.* to the Grace and

Mercy of God for *Pardon*; and to the more full  
 Discovery of His Will by Revelation for the *Terms*  
 and *Conditions upon which he will grant that Pardon*.  
 Pag. 340. For though the Light of Nature, as this Author  
 tells us, may dictate to us indeed what is properly  
 our Duty in order to our not sinning; yet it can never  
 dictate to us *what God will please to require by way of*  
*Atonement and Satisfaction* before He can pardon us  
*after we have sinned*.

The Christian Religion, *precisely* taken (as distin-  
 guished from that of meer Nature and Reason, and  
 containing the *O Economy of Man's Salvation and For-*  
*giveness*) begins here, and is plainly founded upon  
 this Supposition, *That Man is fallen from the original*  
*Purity and Happiness of his Nature by making himself*  
*a Sinner*; and has rendered himself obnoxious (by  
 the Tenour of the Law) to *that Condemnation and*  
*Death* which is the Penalty of the Breach of it,  
 unless some Remedy be found out for this Evil.  
 This Condition of Man, considered as the *offending*  
*Party*, is what the Scripture seems to mean by the  
*Power, the Dominion, the Kingdom of Darknes, of*  
*Death and the Grave, of Sin and Satan; the Body*  
*of Sin and Death, the Curse of the Law*, with sever-  
 al other Expressions amounting to the same thing  
 and signifying *that by reason of our having abused the*  
*Law*, we must (so far as the Law is concerned,  
 and without the Interposition of some *Grace and*  
*Mercy*) be liable to that Death which is the Con-  
 demnation and Curse of it: And all Men, as  
 having offended against the Law, are represented as  
 involved in this unhappy State, and fallen short of  
 that Glory which God originally designed them for.

This is the Condition of Man by fallen Nature,  
 and considered as *under the Law and yet a Breaker*  
*of it, and without a Saviour*. This is the Evil,  
 the State of Sin and Condemnation, which he stands  
 in



in need of being delivered from; and his being delivered from it, and restored to the Favour and Acceptance of God again, so as to have the Rigour of the Law mitigated, and the Execution of it taken away, by the Goodness and Grace of God, through the Merits and Intercession of Jesus Christ, (as Christianity teaches us) is what I understood by *Salvation*, or *being saved*, in the Christian Sense of those Expressions, and seems to have been intended by the *Kingdom of God and of Heaven, of Christ, and of Light* as standing in opposition to the Dominion of *Sin and Death, of Satan and Darknes*, but just now mentioned. And as Man had forfeited his Hope of Life and Happiness through his own Disobedience before the Christian Religion, and is restored to it again through Christ, and in virtue of his Atonement and Intercession for us; so he may justly cry out, and ought to answer with the Apostle, *Wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* And this brings me to the *Second General*.

Rom. vii.

24, 25.

II. Secondly, To shew, *That this Salvation is no otherwise attainable than only through Christ Jesus.* To endeavour to prove this by *single Passages* of Holy Scripture would be to very little or no Purpose; since it is plain (which is sufficient for us who are Christians, and profess to be determined by those sacred Writings) that the whole *Course and Tenour* of the *New Testament* is intirely built upon the Supposition of this Truth, and our Saviour accordingly is there every where spoken of as *the Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the World, as the Peace-maker and Reconciler between God and Man, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of Mankind, and purges us from the Pollution of them by his own*

*own Blood*; with several other Expressions all amounting to the same thing. Neither would it be more proper (considering the Persons whom we have to deal with) to endeavour to prove this by any express Authority whatsoever of Holy Scripture; since it is plain that our Adversaries (though they do not think it proper as yet to speak out) have no Regard at all for those sacred Oracles; and instead of believing, would rather reject a thing the sooner, upon account of its being any wise built upon their Authority. Laying aside therefore at present that Proof, which is taken from the *immediate Authority* of the *New Testament*, (which is very full and express to our present Purpose) I shall only make two or three Observations under this Head, which will at once tend to shew, *That in point of unbiassed and impartial Reason*, we ought to believe that Mankind are saved by the Death and Intercession of our Saviour only, and withal *explain in what Sense they are so*; that we may the better understand and see the Reasonableness of that Christian Doctrine, which these Gentlemen object against, and discover the Errors and Weakness of their Objections.

1. First then I must observe, That whatsoever *rational Grounds* there are for believing the *Authentickness*, and much more the *Divine Inspiration*, of the Books of the *New Testament*, there are the same for believing and embracing this Doctrine: For since it is most evidently contained in *those Writings*; if they are the authentick and genuine Works of the Men whose Names they bear, they ought in Reason to weigh with every impartial Thinker, at least as much as the Writings of an equal Number of profane Authors; and St Paul's or any other Apostle's Assertions may as *justly and reasonably* demand our Assent to them, as those of *Lucian* or *Porphyry*, of  
*Julian*



*Julian* or *Celsus*, or any other of those who were professed Enemies to Christianity. But if those Writings, besides their Authentickness, are of Divine Inspiration, and it is God Himself who *in these last Days bath spoken to us by our Saviour and his Apostles*; then the Truth of this Doctrine is beyond all Contradiction, as proceeding from the Fountain of Truth itself, and asserted by Him who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Those Persons therefore, who give themselves the fashionable Airs of disbelieving the Christian Doctrine, and who pronounce at least freely (however they may think) *that there is nothing at all in it*, because in truth *they understand nothing of it*, ought, before they reject it, to consider thoroughly all those Arguments which are produced for the Authority of the Books of the *New Testament*, and fairly to convince themselves that they are neither inspired nor authentick: And this they ought to do in the way of *sober Reasoning*, and not (as has usually been the Practice of such Persons) by culling out of them particular Facts or Passages, which profane Wits may easily turn into *Jest and Ridicule*; a Method unworthy of *truly rational and impartial Thinkers*, and fit to be used by none but little Jesters and Buffoons.

2. Secondly I would observe, That whatever Arguments are brought for the Certainty of our *Saviour's Resurrection*, are so many Reasons for our believing of this Doctrine; for if *He was declared to be the Son of God with Power* (as the Apostle expresses it) *by his Resurrection from the Dead*, there can be no room left for any rational Man, to doubt of the Truth of whatever he came to teach; and this was evidently one Part of it, *That he was sent from Heaven to lay down His Life for, and thereby to save, the World*. Every Man, therefore, who *freely and impartially* consults his own Reason, must either give up

Rom. i. 4.

up his Assent to this Truth, of which God has given him Assurance by His raising our Saviour from the Dead; or else ought to shew, That the Fact of the Resurrection is not sufficiently made appear to the Eye of Reason, as being *either impossible* in itself, or *not fully attested* by a proper Number of Witnesses, or *not of such* as deserved for their Knowledge and Integrity to be relied upon in a Matter of such Importance: But if Christ's Resurrection is not impossible in itself, and is more fully made appear, both for the Number and Credibility of its Witnesses, than is usually required to convince Mens Reason (nay, *these very Mens Reason*) in any other Case, and yet they refuse to be convinced in this; it is evident that there is in them (as St Paul expresses it) *some Root of Bitterness*, and their Infidelity is owing (whatever they may pretend) *to some other Cause than want of rational Proof.*

Cb. xvi.  
ver. 20.

What is here said concerning the Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour, is proportionably true of those Miracles which were wrought by Himself, and by His Apostles and first Preachers of the Gospel: For since those Miracles were wrought *in pursuance and for the Confirmation* of the Doctrines which were publicly preached by them; they can reasonably be looked upon as nothing else, but God's giving his Attestation to the Truth of those Doctrines, and (as St Mark expresses it) *His working with them, and confirming their Word with Signs following*: And therefore before any Man in common Reason, can set up for a Disbeliever of this Doctrine, he ought fairly to be able (not *scornfully* to pronounce, as is usual with such Persons, but) to convince himself by *free and impartial Reasoning*, either that there never were any such Miracles, or (if that is a Fact too notorious to be denied) that they were not wrought by the Power of God, but were the Effects of Juggling, or brought about by evil Spirits.

3. But



3. But because the Persons whom we have to deal with, seem much more likely to be affected with any thing that comes from the Pagans, than any thing that bears any relation to Scripture or Ecclesiastical History; I shall beg leave in the Third Place to observe to them, That the whole *Religion of the Pagan or Gentile World*, (whether we mean that of the *Patriarchs* or others before *Moses*, or that of any other *Nations distinct from the Jews* afterwards) at least of the *wiser and more rational* Parts of it, whose Writings we have extant among us to this Day, was apparently built upon Three fundamental Principles, which are all of them allowed and admitted of as Principles in the Christian Religion now, only freed from those Errors and Mistakes which they run into for want of a due Application of them: And consequently, Christianity, as to its general Principles, lays down nothing but what was always thought *consonant and agreeable to the highest Reason of Mankind*, and was always practised upon as such (as far as we can find) from the very Beginning of History.

By *Religion* here I mean, not *primary Religion* which God *originally* required of all Mankind, as immediately resulting from their perfect Nature, which consists in *worshipping and serving Him*, and acknowledging our constant dependance on Him, and, in one word, *all the Religion of Nature*; but that which is *secondary*, which consists in doing what is proper and necessary, and what God (upon a Supposition of our having broken his primary Commands) requires *secondarily* to be done as fit and proper for the *Vindication of His Justice and Holiness*, before He can pardon us, and receive us into His Mercy and Favour again; such as *Repentance, confessing and forsaking Sins*, and whatever *Satisfaction* He may think fit to insist upon, as a Condition of our being forgiven and pardoned for our Transgressions; in

one word, the whole Oeconomy of Man's Salvation or Redemption after he had sinned. It is one thing for a Prince to give a Body of most excellent and wholesome Laws to his Subjects, and to require and intend *primarily* their Obedience to them; and another, supposing them to have failed in that Obedience, to require *secondarily* such and such Submissions to be made, and such or such Things to be done or suffered, as *Conditions of his pardoning* them, and receiving them again into his Favour: So it is one thing for God to give a Law to Mankind at his first Creation, *which ought not to have been broken*; and another, when it *has been and continually is broken* (as, I suppose, these Gentlemen will allow me) to prescribe *secondarily* the proper Terms, upon which He may, *fitly and consistently with His own Attributes*, forgive the Breach of it. Religion (whether *Patriarchal, Jewish, or Christian*) in its full Extent comprehends both of these; but I take it in this Place as confined to the latter only, *viz. the Method of Man's Salvation, or being pardoned, supposing him to have first offended*; and to say (as our Author does) that *this is no more than a Republication of the Law of Nature*, is just as wise as to say, *That a Prince's pardoning an Offender against his Law, is only a Republication of the very Law which had condemned him.*

If we take Religion in this restrained Sense, it is evident in the first place, that it was always acknowledged as a Principle by the *Gentile World*, *That Mankind were degenerated* from that Innocence and Purity wherein they were first created, had some way or other polluted themselves with Sin, and thereby incurred the Displeasure of the Deity. This appears from those Complaints, which every one must have met with in their ancient Writers,

of



of Mens having run headlong into all kinds of Wickedness, of the primitive Golden Age's being turned into an Iron one, and Fraud and Violence's having got Possession of the Earth, so that original Righteousness was forced to fly out of it; and the like.

As Mankind by sinning had offended the Supreme Being, so it was the next Principle of the Religion of the *Antients* (whom I will suppose as good Judges, of what was reasonable, congruous, and fitting to be done by Creatures in their Circumstances, who had offended their Creator, as any of us now are): I say, it was a second Principle, which Nature and the Reason of Things dictated to them, That something ought to be done by way of Atonement and Expiation, which might be a Means of appeasing the offended Deity, and avert from them that Punishment which they were liable to: But what would be a sufficient Atonement for them, they were wholly ignorant, and could go no farther than only to offer up the best Things they had, to try whether they would prevail, and procure for them Pardon at the Hands of God, or not: [*Modum reconciliandi hominem cum Deo* (says a late Author of a neighbouring Nation) *ratio ignorat, licet expiatione quadam opus esse satis clare cognoscat.*] And this, in all probability, was what first gave Occasion to that Method, which we know generally prevailed among them, of endeavouring to avert the Displeasure of the Deity by the most costly Sacrifices; which they (some of them) carried to such an Height, as not only to give Hecatombes, and (as the Prophet *Micah* expresses it) thousands of Rams, and ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl, but even to offer up their First-born for their Transgressions, the Fruit of their Bodies for the Sins of their Souls.

*Ursin. de  
Relig. Nat.  
Cultuque  
Dei Ratio-  
nali.*

And because they were persuaded in their own Reason, *That an infinitely holy, and pure, and just Being* (such as they acknowledged the Deity to be) could never *immediately* accept of the Persons or Services of such *sinful, vile, and polluted Creatures* as they had made themselves; therefore they concluded, and seem to have laid it down as a third Principle of their Religion, *That there must be some Being or Beings to mediate and interpose* between them and the most holy and high God, by whose Interest, transacting or interceding for them, their Persons and Oblations (however otherwise unworthy) might be accepted by Him. But here again they were as much in the Dark as before; and not knowing any *Mediator appointed* between God and them, they endeavoured to chuse such, as (in their own Imaginations) they conceived most likely to be of Service to them; such as either the *Host of Heaven, the Sun, Moon, and Stars*, (whom they believed to be Intelligences of an high and exalted Nature) or such Men as they believed by their Virtues and great Actions to have been Favourites of Heaven while they lived here upon Earth, and therefore most likely to have an Interest in the Court of it, now that they were gone to reside there. And this, in all probability, gave Occasion to that Number of inferior Deities (those *Gods many and Lords many*, as the Apostle speaks) which we meet with in the *Gentile* World, and introduced the greatest part of that idolatrous Worship, which in time they became so notoriously guilty of.

Christianity confirms and establishes the Truth in general of these three Principles, which Mankind before (we must say) *bad fallen into by the bare Use and Guidance of their own natural Reason*, since our Adversaries will not allow of such a  
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thing as a Revelation. No Man, therefore, can now set up his *own Reason in Opposition to Christianity*, as to these three Particulars, without opposing at the same time the *common Sense and Reason of all the best Part of Mankind in all Ages of the World*; since they have *all*, as well as Christians, concurred in the Acknowledgment of them; only what they saw but darkly and confusedly by the *naked Eye of Reason*, Christianity shews in it's true and proper Light by the Help of *Revelation*, both with Regard to the *particular Sacrifice and Expiation* that was to be made for Sins; and the *particular Person* who was ordained to be the Mediator between God and Man.

As to the *first* of the three Principles, we are expressly told in the Christian Revelation, *That all Mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are under Sin*; not only as by the present Weakness of their Nature they fall short of that *perfect Image* wherein God created them, and by consequence are *deficient in point of that Perfection which they naturally ought to have* (which has the Nature of Sin in it); but likewise as they have *actually and personally* transgressed that *perfectly holy, and just, and good Law* which God gave them at first, (beside the express Command of *Not eating of the forbidden Fruit*, which *Moses* speaks of,) and have thereby rendered themselves liable to that *Death* (whatever it is) which is the Penalty of the Breach of it: So that if God should *enter into Judgment with them*, they must all be under Condemnation by the Tenour of the Law, and *no Man living could be justified in His Sight*.

It is not imaginable therefore in point of *common Reason*, that any Man can be *saved* by the Merit of his *own Actions*; since every Man by *them* has confessedly done amiss; and if God should be extreme

treme to mark what is so done amiss, no Man living would be able to abide it. Seeing then Man in his present fallen State is a *polluted Creature*, which has to do with an *holy and pure Creator*; a *sinful Transgressor* of the Law given to him, with respect to a *perfect and just Giver* of it; it is hardly possible for us in Reason to conceive, that the former could be admitted by, and be allowed to have freedom of Access to, the latter, without some *Satisfaction or Propitiation* first made to His *Justice and Holiness*; or without some *one to mediate* in Behalf of the unworthy and transgressing Party. And accordingly Christianity not only proceeds upon *these Principles in general*, (as the Patriarchs and wiser Gentiles of old did) but applies them more *particularly*; and *distinctly* teaches us (what the bare Light of Reason could never possibly have taught Men) *that it is Jesus Christ alone* who is that only Sacrifice, and Propitiation to atone for the Sins of the World; and *that it is He alone* (the only Son of God, united to human Nature, and so at the same time both *God and Man*) who is appointed the *Mediator and Intercessor* betwixt God and Man; by whom, from being Enemies, we are made Children of God; and from being discarded, and for ever separated from His Presence, we are now accepted and allowed to have Access with Confidence to the Throne of His Grace; so that *He is the sole Saviour* of us from that Guilt and Condemnation which we were under by the Law, and (as St Paul words it) *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey Him*.

Whether or no the *Gentile or Heathen World* (I mean the better and wiser Part of them) had any Belief of such a Deliverance to be wrought for them by a *Son of God*, I cannot affirm; if they had, it is certain that it could not proceed from  
any



any Deductions of Reason, but must owe it's Original to some Revelation made to some of their Forefathers, and by them handed down to their Posterity after them. Thus much however it may be worth while to observe, That in *Virgil's* Account of the *Restoration* of the World, (which undoubtedly was taken from the *Sibylline Books*, or some *Tradition* that was amongst them) the *Restorer* of it is stiled *Cbara Deum soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum*: And that the Person who was the *Messenger* sent by the most high God, the *Interpreter* and *Foreteller* of the Mind of Heaven, the *Makor* of God's *Instruments*, by which He was to be avenged of His Enemies, the great *Conquerors* and *Deliverers* of Mankind from Monsters, and the final Judges of the Dead; the *Gentiles Mercury* and *Apollo*, their *Vulcan* and *Bacchus*, their *Hercules* and *Perseus*, their *Æacus* and *Minos*, are all of them represented in their poetical *Mythology* as the *Sons* of their *supreme Jove*; which makes it seem probable, that they had at least some *obscure Notion* amongst them, that a *Son* of the most high God was to be sent from Heaven, was to reveal or be the *Interpreter* of his Father's Will to Mankind, to be His *Avenger* against his Enemies, and the *Deliverer* of Mankind from the Evils which they laboured under, and finally to be their Judge. But as this is meer Conjecture, so I lay no Stress upon it, but leave every Man free to admit or reject it as he please.

We have therefore now no Occasion for the Sacrifices of *Bulls* and of *Goats* to take away Sin, which could never have any Virtue in them to that Purpose; nor of any *inferior Beings* (whether *Angels* or *Men*) to interceed on our Behalf: Since *Christ* by His own Blood has purged away our Sins, and with it has entered into Heaven itself, there for ever

ever to *appear in the Presence of God for us.* The Sacrifices of Beasts under the Law of Moses, and those offered by the Patriarchs and others before the Law, might serve (and certainly did serve) as very proper Shadows of Good Things to come; but the Body which was represented by those Shadows was only Christ. When we find therefore (as we often do in the Books of the *New Testament*) that *Salvation and Forgiveness, Justification, Remission, blotting out of Sins,* and the like, are ascribed to *Repentance, to confessing and forsaking Sins, to Faith and Charity, to Sincerity of Obedience,* and the *Use of the holy Sacraments,* or the like, on Man's Part; this is not so to be understood, as if any of those Things were able to procure such Advantages for us in virtue of any *Merit inherent in themselves*; but only that these are *Conditions,* which God has thought proper to be required on our Part, upon our due Performance of which *He will be pleased to pardon and accept us, in virtue only of the Merits and Intercession of our Blessed Saviour;* so that *He* alone is the *meritorious Cause* of our being saved from our Sins, and these *the Terms* upon which God now admits us to His Grace and Favour again, instead of *that perfect and unsinning Obedience,* which was required of us as born under the Law of Nature.

Seeing then all Men both Jews and Gentiles (as the Apostle speaks) *are concluded under Sin,* as having transgressed the perfect and compleat Law of their Nature; and consequently must be all of them under Sentence of Condemnation, (so far as the Law is concerned) unless God please to take them into his Grace and Favour, and to enter into Terms of a new Covenant with them: And seeing it is hardly reconcileable with our common Reason to believe, that a just and wise Law-giver should,



should, without more ado, forgive the Abuse of His Law; or that *an infinite holy and pure God* should admit into His Presence His polluted and sinful Creatures, without some *Satisfaction made* to His Justice and Holiness, or some way shewing His *just Displeasure* against Sin; or that He should come to any new Terms with them, without *some one to mediate* or interpose on their Behalf: And seeing *their own Works and their own Persons* (as being themselves sinful, and consequently offensive to Almighty God) could not possibly bring this to pass for them; nor can any Attonement made by the *Blood of others*, nor any Interposition of *Men or inferior Spirits*, be in Reason assigned as sufficient for bringing about such a great Event: And lastly, seeing *the Law of Nature itself* (which Mankind had abused and broken) could not possibly *save* them, because that had already *condemned* them for the Abuse of it; it will unavoidably follow in point of *plain Reason*, either that Mankind must be still unhappily under the Sentence of Condemnation, as Breakers of the Law; or if (as the Apostle speaks) *there is now no Condemnation*, (which is really the Case) that must wholly be owing to the Grace of God *through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus*; and can arise from *hence only* (unless Men can assign some other Way, either natural or revealed) *because the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set them free from the Law of Sin and Death*; and consequently it is Christ Jesus alone who by His Merits and Intercession is the Procurer of this Salvation for us, and *there is none other Name under Heaven given among Men by which we must be saved*.

In a word, and to sum up what has been said in short; The Christian Religion (taken in its greatest Latitude) lays it down as a fundamental and acknowledged Truth, *That God is a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and Power*, which enabled and inclined Him to *contrive, design, and execute* all his  
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Works in a perfect Manner ; and accordingly, that Man, as he came originally out of the Hands of his Creator, must needs have been *perfect in his Kind and Order*, without Sin and without Misery. In this *primitive State* of Man's Innocence and Perfection, God gave to him a perfect and compleat Law, requiring him to do whatsoever was *fit and proper for a Creature of such a Nature to do*, both with respect to his Creator, to his Fellow-Creatures, and himself, or the Dignity of his own Nature : And this under the Sanction of having *Life, and continuing for ever in his Favour*, if Man obeyed this Law ; but of *Death, and being excluded for ever from His Divine Presence*, if he transgressed the Precepts of it. And this is what I understand by the *Religion or Law of Nature*, which every Man, as far as he is Partaker of human Nature, is still (as to the Law itself) obliged to obey, and which I will suppose to be as *perfect, as compleat, and sufficient for the End* intended by it, (*viz. the preserving Man's Innocence* according to his Nature, and consequently his Happiness) as any one can desire : And this was Man's *first State*, which his wise and good Creator provided for him ; and in which, if he had continued, he would have been ever happy, without wanting any one to save him. Man, being a *free Agent*, soon made a wrong Use of that Liberty and those Faculties which God had given him, transgressed against the Law of his perfect Nature, and thereby involved himself in *Sin*, and consequently in *Death or Separation from Almighty God*, the legal Punishment of his Sin ; and this is Man's *fallen or present natural State*, which he stands in need of being *saved* out of : And in this State he must have continued for ever, unless some Remedy (more than what the Law, as such, could provide) had been found out for him. But God of His Mercy, as soon as Man was fallen into these unhappy Circumstances, was Himself pleased to find out a Way for him to escape,

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to enter into the Terms of a *new and gracious Covenant* with him, whereby God engages Himself, in *Consideration* of the Merits and Intercession of our Blessed Saviour; (who came down from Heaven, and took upon Him our Nature, and in that Nature was made a Sacrifice, for that Purpose) and upon Condition of certain Duties to be performed on Man's Part, (such as *Repentance, Faith, Sincerity of Obedience to the Law* for the Time to come, *the Use of certain Ordinances* which he thought proper to appoint as Badges and Seals of this Covenant, and the like, as set forth to us in Holy Scripture.) I say, God engages His Faithfulness and Justice upon these Conditions to *pardon their Transgressions, and their Sins and Iniquities to remember no more.* And this is the third State of Mankind, viz. that of *Grace and Salvation* revealed to us by Jesus Christ, in which we now are *under the Christian Dispensation*, as it stands in Opposition to the State of *Sin and Death*, which all Men were involved in by the *Tenour of the Law*, (as having been Breakers of it) and which all must continue in as long as they continue in their fallen natural State without Christ Jesus; unless these Gentlemen, by the Use of their clear Reason, can discover some better Way of *being saved* from it, (as it will appear they cannot) different from that of Christ Jesus our Lord, *whom God has set forth* (as Rom. iii. the Apostle speaks) *to be the Propitiation through 25. Faith in his Blood for the Remission of Sins*; and who has himself assured us, *That He is the Way, and the* Joh. xiv. 6. *Truth, and the Life*; or, in other Words, the *true Way that leads Men to Life and Happiness.*

This is a brief, but (I hope) clear Account of the *rational Principles* of that holy Religion, which has now for many Ages been professed amongst us, and of the different States which Mankind have been in, with relation to their moral or religious Condition: And I defy this Author, or any of his Disciples, to shew, that there is any thing in it in-

consistent with the *Nature and Reason of Things*, with plain *Fact and the Experience* of all Mankind, or with those *clear Ideas* (to use his own Words) *which we have or ought to have of the Divine Being*; or that any of its Doctrines are unworthy of that God, whose Character in *Holy Scripture* (our *human Tradition*, as he is scornfully pleased to call it) as well as in *human Reason*, is, to be *perfectly wise, infinitely holy, and just, and good*. And yet this is the Religion which this Infidel Writer, and some others in Conjunction with him, have been of late, and still are endeavouring, with great Industry, and greater Malice, (I hope it cannot be added, *and too much Encouragement from some People*) to pull down and destroy, without telling us distinctly and clearly what it is they would set up instead of it. They shelter themselves indeed under the Covert of the *Law of Nature*, without seeming to understand that the *Law of Nature*, if they mean by it the Obligation of doing what is *congruous and fitting for Creatures of such a Nature* to do, both with respect to God, to their *Fellow-Creatures*, and *themselves*, (which the Christian Revelation expresses by *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*;) If they mean *the loving the Lord our God with all our Hearts* and all our Souls, and our Neighbours as ourselves, (which they affect to call by the more genteel Name of *Universal Benevolence*, because the Scripture ones of *Love or Charity* look a little *too Christian*;) or if they mean by it the doing *whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are virtuous, praise-worthy, and of good Report*: I say, if they mean any of these Things by the *Law of Nature*; I defy them to shew, that the Observation of the *Law of Nature* in all these Senses is not *more strictly* required of us, and *upon stronger Motives*, now under the Christian Dispensation, which they are endeavouring to destroy,



stroy, than it can possibly be upon any of their wild Schemes.

This must therefore be downright Grimace and (as the Apostle expresses it) *speaking Lyes in Hypocrisy*, and can only be designed to deceive and lead<sup>2</sup>. captive some *silly* People, or some *wicked* ones who have a mind to be led captive by such Pretences. The Law of *Nature*, of *Reason*, of *Virtue*, and of *Universal Love or Benevolence*, is already in full Force as a *Rule of Duty* in the Christian Religion; and I challenge this Writer or any of his Abettors (if they have the Confidence) to say the contrary. It is impossible therefore *in the Nature of Things* that they should endeavour to pull down the Christian Religion, in order to set *this* up, which is already *more strongly set up* by that Religion than it can be by any other; and they themselves know it is so. It is to be feared therefore that by the *Law of Nature* they mean something else (though they do not think it proper as yet to speak out) *viz.* not the Law of our *perfect*, but of our *imperfect and corrupt Nature*; not of the *Mind*, but of the *Body*; not of *Righteousness*, but of *Sin*; (as *St. Paul* distinguishes them) *i. e.* following the irregular Appetites and Inclinations, the vicious Lusts and Desires of our present polluted Nature, and (which was evidently meant by *their Forerunner Epicurus*, and those of his Sect) *every Man's doing whatever is most pleasing and agreeable to himself, so far as it is not ruinous of, and destructive to his Being and the main Pleasure of it*: And consequently they are so far from setting up the *Law of Nature* in a proper Sense, (which consists in restraining and subduing those Appetites) as that they really take away *all Law whatsoever*, and introduce instead of it an universal Liberty, or rather *Licentiousness*, of every Man's pursuing his own Inclinations, and doing what seems *right in his own Eyes*: And the Dispute is not (as this Writer falsely represents it) between Christianity and the Law of Nature,

Nature, the latter of which is entirely taken into and confirmed by the former ; but between Virtue and Vice, Religion and Irreligion, and the Doctrine and Morals of Christ and His Apostles on the one hand, and that of *Epicurus* and his licentious Followers on the other. And whenever this Author will give us an explicit Delineation of *his Religion of Nature*, I dare say that *Fornication* and an unrestrained Intercourse of the human Sexes with each other, *more pecudum vivere* ; and an indulging the other Appetites and Inclinations of the Body, so far as is consistent with the main Pleasure and Preservation of it ; or, (to use his own Expressions) *a* Pag. 345. *pursuing that warm Desire which is implanted in human Nature after such a manner, as tends most to the Happiness of both the Parties* (which doubtless the Parties under the Influence of that *warm Desire* are the most proper Judges of:) This, I say, I believe will make no small Figure in his Catalogue of *Moral or Religious Duties*, according to *his Law of Nature*.

It may justly be suspected therefore (and, I confess, I must suspect it, till the Principles or Practices of these free-thinking Gentlemen convince me of the contrary) that the Reason of their Opposition against the Christian Religion is, not (as they falsely and insidiously give out) because they would set up the *more perfect Law of Nature* ; but just the Reverse, viz. because the *Law of Nature* is in the highest degree established and *indispensably enjoin'd in the Christian Religion*, they are for abolishing the *Law of Nature* and Christianity together, in order to set up an *unbounded Licentiousness*, and a *Liberty of indulging their own vicious Inclinations* (which is what they mean by *following Nature*) in the room of it ; and they are Enemies to the Cross of Christ, not because they cannot (in point of *fair Reason*) come into it, but because they *have a mind to get rid of it*, as a troublesome Companion that upbraids them with their



their Wickedness; and there is in them (as the Apostle expresses it) an *evil Heart of Unbelief*: *Biblia sacra traducunt*, (says the foreign Writer whom I just now mentioned) *Verbi divini Ministris illudunt, Urfin. p. 87. Et sibi met ipsis talem fingunt religionem, qualem forte il-*  
*lorum genius requirit.* But it is not my Business to enquire into the Motives (be that to themselves and their own Consciences) upon which these Gentlemen have such a professed dislike to the Christian Religion; but to shew that the Arguments or Objections which are produced by them against the Doctrine here mentioned, are but very *vain and trifling*: And this is what I shall endeavour to do in the following Discourse.



## ACTS IV. 12.

*Neither is there Salvation in any other : for there is none other Name under Heaven given among Men whereby we must be saved.*

III. **I** Now proceed (which was proposed under the *Third Head*) to answer the *Cavils* which have been brought by our Adversaries, and particularly the fore-mentioned Author, against the Doctrine here laid down, *viz. Of Mankind's being saved by Jesus Christ alone*, and to shew the Weakness and Insufficiency of *them*. And here I shall wholly pass by unregarded, (as really not deserving any *rational Man's Notice*) all the little *Buffooneries*, sly *Suggestions*, and malicious *Insinuations* against Christianity and its Professors, (more particularly against the *Priests* of it;) all the violent Outcries against *Superstition* and *Priestcraft*, *Creed-making*, *Bigottry*, *Persecution*, and the like, which we meet with so frequently among these *Gentlemen of great Benevolence*; and shall entirely confine myself to the proper Subject now before us, *viz. to answer the Arguments, or seeming Arguments*, which have been brought more especially by the fore-named Writer: *First*, Against the Belief of *any Method at all* of Salvation's being wrought for us; and *Secondly*, Against the *particular one* here asserted in the Text, *viz. its being procured by no other than the Merit and Mediation of our blessed Saviour*.

Of each of these in their Order. And

1. *First*, It is argued by the fore-mentioned Writer (whom I take to be the *Retailer* of the Sentiments and Pleas of the rest of that Society, who would be thought the only Men that *think with Freedom and Impartiality*) That the *Law*, or (if you please)



the *Religion* of Nature, is of itself *sufficient*, without any thing else, to procure the Happiness of all Mankind, or *else God must have been wanting in making Provision for that Purpose*: And, consequently, that there is no Occasion for any *other Saviour*, and that to introduce such an one is *superstitious and vain*: And he more than once hints (though he does not care to speak out,) that it is *this* which properly distinguishes Religion from downright *Superstition*; that the *former* relies upon the perfect Law of Nature, as *sufficient of itself* to make all Men happy; whereas the *latter* (as if Nature had not sufficiently provided) was always putting Men upon contriving other Saviours, and other Methods for obtaining the same End: So that *Christianity, or the Belief of being saved by Jesus Christ, or indeed by any other than the Religion or Law of Nature*, is all at once rejected, as a Piece of *Vanity and Superstition*. This is the Ground of that common Outcry, which among some People it is thought *genteel and fashionable* to make against *Superstition*; but such a Ground as no Man would venture to build his Salvation upon, nor indeed, any thing else, but a Fool's Paradise. In order to discover the great Weakness of this *Cavil*, we need only observe (as was done in the former Discourse) *That as every Law, in the Nature of the Thing, must absolve and justify in the Sight of the Law-giver, those who have observed and lived up to the Precepts of it; so every one, on the contrary, that has a Penalty annexed to it, must condemn and consign to Punishment* (without the Intervention of some *Grace and Mercy*, which are Things foreign to the Law) *those who have transgressed and broke through its Rules*.

Supposing therefore the Law of Nature to be as *sufficient* for procuring the Happiness of all Mankind as these Gentlemen would have it; I should be glad to know of them, whether they

mean the Law of Nature *observed*, or the Law of Nature *broken*: If they mean the former, viz. That the Law of Nature, which God gave Man at the Creation, had it been duly observed by Man, was sufficient of itself, without any other Addition, to attain the End mention'd; they say no more than what all the World allow: Since it is universally acknowledged, That if Man had continued to live without Sin according to the Law, he would have continued to live in the Favour of God, and consequently would have been happy, and not have needed any Saviour; so that the Law in that Case would not only have been sufficient, but effectual to that End; and all our Author's Pains to shew the *Excellency and Sufficiency* of the Law of Nature, is only a downright Mistake of the Point in question, and nothing at all to the purpose, unless it be to make his unwary Followers believe, that Christianity is an Enemy to Mankind's being governed by the Law of Nature and Reason; whereas Christianity enforces it, to the highest Degree, but only says, That Mankind have transgressed this perfect Law, and therefore must stand in need of being pardoned for such their Transgression; and that it is Christ alone who has procured this Pardon from God the Author of the Law. If they mean the latter, viz. That the Law of Nature, though transgressed by Mankind, yet was still sufficient, without any other Means, to procure their Happiness; they say what no Man ever said or thought before them; since all the World agree, that a Law as such must bring under Condemnation, and consequently subject to its Penalty, those who are guilty of transgressing the Rules of it: Not that in this Case, any want of *Sufficiency to make Men happy* can be charged upon the Law, or upon God the Author of it, (as this Writer often argues;) but the *End intended* by the Law is in effect not obtained, through some Deficiency or Fault of those who were subject to it.

To illustrate this by a familiar Instance or two:  
Suppose



Suppose a Father, upon setting out his Son into the World, to lay down to him the *wisest and best Rules imaginable* for the Conduct of his Life, and to make him *such an Allowance as should be every way sufficient* for his handsome Maintenance in his Place and Station; if the Son afterwards, by his Folly and Indiscretion, breaks through these *wise Rules*, and out-spends this *full Allowance*, he may easily bring himself (notwithstanding the wise and prudent Care of his Father) into Debt and a Prison: Here no one would say, but that the Father had done what was *every way sufficient and proper* to be done on his Part; and no rational Man would argue (as this Author does in several Places) if the Son by his *own Folly* has brought himself into ill Circumstances, that therefore *there must have been an undeniable Default in the Giver of this Advice and Allowance to him*, (they are our Author's own Words) in *appointing Means not sufficient to answer their designed Ends*. Pag. 378.

Again; Suppose a Member (or Members) of any of our Societies, which were established for the Promotion of *Religion, Learning, and Virtue* in the World, after many Years eating his Founder's Bread, should appear neither *religious, nor learned, nor virtuous*; there *must have been indeed an undeniable Default* somewhere or another: But must that Default therefore (I appeal to this Writer) be laid upon the Founders, for *appointing Means not sufficient to answer their designed Ends?* or ought it not much rather to be laid upon the unworthy Party, who hath made an *ill Use of the proper Means* that were appointed. The Application of both is too obvious to stand in need of any thing further's being said about it.

I would observe therefore, that the Word *sufficient* is commonly taken in two different Senses; sometimes for that which is *effectually* so, and sometimes for that which is *only so in the Nature of Things*, but the Effect is by some Means or another hin-

der'd: And accordingly when it is argued (as it often is by these Gentlemen) that if the Law of Nature is not *sufficient of itself* to procure Man's Happiness, it will follow that *God has not sufficiently provided by Nature* for the Happiness of all his Creatures; the Answer is very easy, *viz. That the Law of Nature was of itself sufficient*; and *God did sufficiently provide on His Part* for the Happiness of them all; so that no Defect can justly be charged upon *His Side*: But *His sufficient Provision* may be render'd (though we cannot say properly *insufficient*, yet) *ineffectually sufficient* by a Fault justly chargeable on the Side of some of them. And this is really the present Case; God gave Man a Law at his first Creation *duly fitted and suited to his reasonable Nature*, and every way *sufficient* (had it been followed as it ought to have been) to make him *effectually happy*: But Man has *abused and transgressed this Law*, and thereby rendered it only *ineffectually sufficient* for the intended Purpose; and something further must now be necessary in order to the *effectually* producing the same End, or else Mankind (by *their own Fault* indeed, and not the *Law's*) will be left fallen short of their State of Happiness. I would desire the forementioned Writer therefore to give me a fair Answer to the following short Question, *viz. Whether the Bulk of Mankind* (as he is pleased to express himself) *Jews and Heathens, Christians and Mahometans*, have sinned and do sin against the original, *unvariably perfect* Law of Nature, or not? If he answers *Not*, (as I think *he ought to do*, according to his Principles, and I dare say *would do*, if he thought it proper to speak out) this is not only contrary to the express Declarations of Holy Scripture (which he has no Regard for) but to the *Experience*, the *Sentiments*, and the *Complaints* of all Men (as far as we know) in all Ages of the World, who have always talked (as was observed in my late Discourse) of *Mankind's*  
having



having run headlong into all manner of Wickedness, of the primitive *Golden Age's* being turned into an *Iron one*, and the like; and among whom it was always a Question, *How so much Evil should get into the World*, considering the Goodness and Perfection of God? But it never was any Question, *Whether it was in the World, or no?* If he answer, *That Mankind have been guilty of Sin*; it will follow, that then they must be under Condemnation by virtue of the *Law as such*, and the greater Condemnation the more compleat and sufficient the Law was for their Happiness; and consequently must necessarily be in want of something else *over and above the Law of Nature* (*viz.* of Grace and Mercy) *to save them from that Condemnation*: And *the Method of doing this* is what the Christian Religion informs us of; this is that *Life and Immortality* which *through* our Saviour Jesus Christ is brought to light to us by the Gospel, and what the forementioned Writer is pleased to brand with the Name of a *Load of Superstition*, and *an insupportable Burden which Superstition has laid* Pag. 8. Pag. 366.  
*Men under*, without one Tittle of Argument to prove that it is so.

2. But this Writer further argues, *Secondly*, That seeing the *Law, or Religion, of Nature* (as coming from God Himself) must needs be *compleat and perfect*, it is impossible that any thing further should be *added* to it: And therefore *the Christian Religion can be no other than that of Nature*, or rather (which is his Meaning in other Words) *there can be no Christian Religion at all, but only Natural*; since that which is already *perfect* is not capable of any Addition. This, I believe, is the Author's favourite Argument, since he is very frequent in the Repetition of it, in order to its making the more deep Impression upon the Minds of his simple and unwary Readers. The Answer to it is very easy and obvious, *viz.* That *supposing the Perfection* of the Religion or Law of Nature, it will follow that nothing could afterwards be added  
to

to it as a *Part or Appendix of the same sort and kind, to supply any Deficiencies that had been found in it*; for this would be apparently an Impeachment of its *Perfection*: But that after the perfect Law of Nature had done its Duty, *all that a Law could do*; and Mankind, by sinning against such a perfect Law, had made themselves exceeding sinful, incurred its Penalty, and were thereby deprived of the Acceptance of God and their own Happiness; that after this (I say) no additional Method could be found out by God Himself, in order to save them from this Condemnation, (*viz. a Method of Grace and Favour, entirely foreign to, and distinct from the Law*) without accusing the Law of some Defect or Imperfection on its Part; this is altogether *unreasonably and absurdly imagined*; since in this Case the Defect will lie wholly on the Part of *those, who have broken the Law*, and not upon the Law itself, *which has been broken by them*: For is any Law, as a Rule of Conduct and Behaviour, to be esteemed the less perfect, because some People will foolishly or perversely disobey its Precepts, and thereby involve themselves in the Inconveniences that must follow upon such their Disobedience? Or, is it any Reflection upon the *Compleatness of the Law itself*, or the *Wisdom of its Maker*, or any Addition to it for a Supply of its Defects, if some *other Ways and Means* are afterwards resolved upon, in order to save from such Inconveniences those that have incurred them? Were the Father's Advice and Allowance to his Son (that I may continue in the Illustration before mentioned) ever the less perfect and compleat in themselves, because the Son took no Care to behave himself according to them, and has thereby brought himself into Debt and a Prison? Or, if the Father afterwards, out of Love and Compassion to him, shall deliver him from these Circumstances upon certain Conditions which he thinks fit to prescribe to him, is this properly any Addition to his former wise Methods which he had taken with his Son,



Son, in order to supply their Deficiency? Or, is it an entirely new Agreement, a Method of Love and Favour which he is willing to use toward his Son, without any Impeachment of the Goodness and Perfection of what he had formerly done for him, and which his Son's Indiscretion only had rendered ineffectual?

To illustrate this Matter still a little further, let us consider impartially how it is amongst ourselves: Let us suppose the *Law of our own Nation* to be as perfect and compleat as it is possible for any thing of that kind to be; and a Number of Persons notwithstanding to have transgressed it, and by such their Transgression to be brought under Sentence of Condemnation: Here if any Person of Authority and Interest should interpose in their Behalf, and the King should grant, and actually sign their Pardon, upon certain Conditions which he thinks proper to insist upon; as that of transporting themselves (for Instance) into some of the Plantations, or the like: Would any one (nay, would this Author himself) say, *That this was* a Clause super-added to correct the Imperfection of the Law? Or, would he not rather say, *That this was* an Act of Grace and Mercy, not added to the Law as if it wanted something to perfect it, but only coming after the Law to bring about an Event, which the Law itself, in the Nature of the Thing, (if People would be so foolish as to be guilty of the Breach of it, and incur its Penalty) could not possibly bring about? For the perfect and compleat Law is supposed to have condemned these Criminals, and therefore as such could not save them from such Condemnation; but that must be effected (if ever it is effected) by some other Means, viz. those of Grace and Favour. To apply this to our present Purpose: I will suppose the Law, or Religion, of Nature to have been absolutely perfect and compleat as a Rule of Action: I will suppose too, (till this Au-

thor is pleased to deny it) that Mankind in general, and each Man in particular, *have sinned and do sin* against the Precepts of this perfect Law; and consequently (if they have nothing else but the Law to depend upon) must be under Condemnation, and liable to be deprived of the *Acceptance of God* and the *Happiness of their Nature*, which were the End of the Law. If God then afterwards, by an *Act of Grace and Mercy*, and in Consideration of the Merits and Intercession of Jesus Christ, shall be pleased to suspend or remit this Penalty, and to *save them from this Condemnation* to which they were subject by the Law; is it common Sense and Reason for any Man hence to argue, *That if this were so, the Law must needs have been imperfect?* Or, that God by His Law had *not sufficiently* provided for the Happiness of all His Creatures? Certainly no; but the Conclusion that we ought to make is, (give me Leave to repeat what I have already often mentioned) That though the Law was *holy, and just, and good*, yet Man, by the wrong Use which he made of his Liberty, had transgressed this *perfect* Law; and the Law as such, *in the Nature and Reason of Things*, could do no other than *condemn him*; and therefore something further (*viz. Grace and Mercy*, which are Things *different from the Law*, and which the Law as such, though never so perfect, could not possibly procure) must be *absolutely necessary* in order to *save him*, or else he must for ever lie *under this Condemnation*.

3. But, *Thirdly*, this Author endeavours by another Argument to shew, that the Christian Religion (which, by way of Contempt, he is pleased often to join with *Mahometan and Pagan*, and to call them all alike scornfully by the Name of *traditional Religion*) cannot possibly add any thing, and consequently not Terms of Forgiveness and Pardon, to the Religion or Law of Nature, *viz. Because they have both of them the same End*, and consequently must both of them



them prescribe the same *Means* for the Attainment of it. And therefore nothing by the one can be superadded to the other, since they are the same both as to the *End* and the *Means* for attaining that *End*. That the Religion of *Nature*, and that of *Christ Jesus*, have both the same *ultimate End*, (*viz.* the *Glory of God* and *Happiness of Mankind*) I readily acknowledge; but that they have both the same *immediate or subordinate End*, I can by no means allow; *that* of the former being evidently *to preserve Mankind* (by giving them a perfect Rule of Duty) *in their natural State* of Innocence and Happiness, wherein they were created; and that of the latter, *to deliver them from a preternatural State* of Sin and Misery, into which they had brought themselves by transgressing the Rule of Nature; *that* of the former, *to preserve Health from being lost*; and *that* of the latter, *to restore it again after it had been lost*: And therefore to affirm, *that the latter cannot possibly add any thing to the former*, is just as reasonable as to say, *that when a Physician has given a perfectly good Sett of Rules* to any Friend of his for the *Preservation* of his Health, which is exactly suited to his Temper and Constitution; if that Friend afterwards (through a Neglect of those Rules) should fall into a dangerous Illness, he must not by any Means prescribe any thing else for the *Recovery* of his Health, without discovering the Imperfection of his former Rules given for the *Preservation* of it; since the *End* of both Prescriptions being the same, *Health*, the *Means* of obtaining it must be the same in both, and nothing new could be added by the latter to the former, if it were perfect in its kind; since that which is *perfect* can admit of no Addition; and consequently, in his Friend's Illness, he can prescribe *nothing new* for the Removal of it, but only make a *Republication of the same excellent Rules*, which he had before laid down to preserve him from such a State of Illness.

If therefore by the Law of Nature's being *absolutely perfect* this Author means, that it *wanted no*

*Part or Degree of Excellence*, that could possibly be required in a Law or Rule of Duty, which was exactly fitted to the then Constitution of Man's Nature, and designed and given for the Preservation of his Innocence, in order to his final Happiness; I readily come into it: But if he means, that it was *so absolutely perfect*, as that, when it was broke, there could be no new Covenant, nor any *new Conditions of pardoning and forgiving the Breach of it afterwards*, in order to restore Man to his lost Happiness; this I *absolutely* deny. Perhaps this Author will say (as he seems to do in several Places) *that whatever tends any way to the Happiness of Mankind*, (and consequently this new Covenant of *Pardon and Forgiveness*, if ever there was such a thing) is comprehended within his Notion of the *Law of Nature*, as a *Superstructure* belonging to it. Not to dispute at present about the Largeness of his Notion of the *Law of Nature*, in making it extend to a State which is wholly preternatural, *viz. that of Sin and Guilt*; I shall only observe, That it is odd enough to hear a Man, who had just been arguing for the *Perfection* and *absolute Perfection* of the Law of Nature, which was given to Man at his first Creation, before he had sinned, and which was *then unchangeably perfect*; now talking, as he does, of a *Superstructure* belonging to it after Sin had been committed. This perfect Law therefore (it seems) of Nature, though *incapable of* having any Addition or Alteration, yet may admit of a *Superstructure*. When this Writer explains what he means by a Superstructure, which *makes neither Alteration nor Addition to the Building which it is a Superstructure to, and which was before perfect*, I will promise him to consider a little farther of this Evasion; but till then, I freely own it is somewhat above my Comprehension. But a Man that can make Sense of *Christian Deists*, (*i. e.* Christians who *refuse to acknowledge Christ*) as this Author often talks, may (I confess) make Sense of any thing; and by Dint of such clear Ideas as he is Master of,

may



may as truly call himself a *Protestant Papist*, and talk just as intelligibly of *black Snow*, and a *Sun that has neither Warmth nor Brightness*, and of *Superstructures to perfect Buildings* that neither alter nor add to them.

4. But this Author further argues against the Christian Religion, *Fourthly*, That, *supposing the Law itself*, though never so perfect, *could not* pardon and justify those who for their Sins were subject to its Condemnation; yet still there was no Occasion for any Propitiation or Intercession (as the Christian Revelation teaches) since God is *inclined*, nay, and *under an Obligation*, as a tender Father of all His Children, of His own free Good-Pag. 29.ness (without insisting upon any thing of that Nature) to pardon all their Sins, and pass by their Transgressions; and *He certainly will* do so. That these Men should pretend, by the bare Light of Reason, to know all that is required by the *Law of Nature and Reason*, or (in the Author's Words) *That every intelligent Creature should have sufficient Understanding to discover those Duties which Mens Relation to God and one another requires of them*, appears something plausible; but that they should presume by the Light of human Reason to direct God Himself, and to determine what He *will* do or is *obliged* to do, in the Exercise of His vindictive Justice, or the Manifestation of His Mercy, when they have transgressed *that Law*, is really Insolence intolerable. The learned *Pufendorf*, (as good an Author as Mr. Nye, or any other whom this Author has produced) expressly tells us, *That how God will* do in the Execution of His vindictive Justice, *supra nostrum est captum*; but these Men imagine that nothing is too high for their *Capacities*, and set up human Reason not only to be a Judge of what is fit and proper for *Man* to do, but to decide upon the Proceedings of *God Himself*, and are as confident of what He *will* do or *not* do in the Distribution of His Justice and Mercy, as if they were

fully acquainted with the Mind of the Lord, and were admitted into the Number of his Privy-Counsellors.

But to return an Answer to this Argument in Form: That God is a Being *infinitely gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great Goodness, that pardoneth Sins, and passes by Transgressions*, is readily acknowledged both from Scripture-Revelation, and those common Notions which all the World conceive of the Divine Nature; and accordingly Christianity is nothing else but the *Method of God's pardoning and forgiving Sins by Jesus Christ*: But it is difficult to imagine that an *infinitely wise Governor* (such as God is acknowledged on all Hands to be) should establish a Law at one Time by his own Authority, (as this Author allows Him to have done) the Penalty of the Breach of which was Death and Exclusion from His Favour and Acceptance; and yet as soon as it was broken should remit that Penalty, and without any Consideration (but only moved by his mere Goodness and Compassion) should admit the Breakers of it into His Favour again: And I cannot well see how such a Conduct as this is, can be fairly reconciled with that *Invariableness and Immutability of the Divine Nature and Law*, which upon other Occasions this Author lays such a mighty Stress upon. But there are *other Attributes* belonging to the Divine Nature beside the single one of *Mercy*; and tho' *this* should be allowed (as some are pleased to express it) to be the *favourite* one; yet it cannot be imagined, in point of mere Reason, that God should be so influenced in *partial* Favour of any one of his Attributes, as to deny Himself, and do Violence to several others, which are plainly as essential to His Divine Nature as *that*. If *Mercy* rejoiced against *Judgment* in God's Willingness to forgive Mens Sins, yet surely we cannot conceive that He should do it wholly without Judgment. And if we consider Him either as *an unchangeably wise and*  
just



*just Legislator, or as an infinitely holy and pure Being,* we cannot in reason imagine, that (in the *former* of those Capacities) He could remit the Punishment of the Breach of His own Law, without at least *some Satisfaction*; or (in the *latter*) that, without *some Propitiation made for Sin*, He could accept and admit again into his Divine Presence those who were stained and polluted with the Guilt of it. Now *Repentance* and *Resolutions of better Obedience* for the future, and even that *better Obedience itself*, are no more than doing our Duty according to the Tenour of the Law for the *Time to come*; but make no amends, and give no Satisfaction to the Justice of the Law-giver, for the *Transgressions past*: And therefore it is but reasonable and just to conclude, (and *that* from the very Nature and Reason of Things themselves) that God granted His gracious Pardon upon certain *Terms and Conditions*, and had *some Satisfaction* made to his Justice and Holiness, in Consideration whereof He enters into a New Covenant with Mankind, whereby He engages Himself (on their Performance of those Conditions) *to be gracious unto them, and their Sins and Iniquities to remember no more.*

Thus far Reason (mere *human Reason*) may be supposed to go by its own native Light; but *what Terms in particular* the most Holy and Wise God will be pleased to insist upon, before He executes this Covenant; and *what particular Duties* He will require on our Part, as *Conditions of our being pardoned and restored to His Favour*; this *human Reason* can never be a competent Judge of, without the *additional Help of Revelation* to assist it: In order to know *the Articles* upon which the Treaty was entered into, it must be necessary to have *Recourse to the Treaty itself.*

And further, as Man, who was the *condemned Party, and shut up under Sin*, cannot easily be imagined to have been able to transact this Affair in his own Behalf; so it is reasonable to believe, that  
it

it was brought about by the *Mediation and Intercession* of some other ; and as no other Person can, with any Shew of Reason, be assigned for this Purpose, so most probably by *Jesus Christ* the Son of the offended God, whom *Revelation* has expressly declared to be that Person, and who is therefore styled in Holy Scripture *the Mediator of a new and better Covenant, and the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them that obey him*. We have this Advantage therefore in *the Religion of Jesus Christ*, over and above what this Writer and his deluded Followers do or can pretend to under *that of mere Nature* ; That they, when they have sinned, (as I suppose he will allow me that he and all Men have done) have nothing else to rely upon for their final Happiness, but the *single Attribute of God's uncovenanted Mercy* ; and this in Contradiction (as far at least as appears to our Reason) to His *immutable Justice and Holiness* : Whereas we (supposing that the Christian Covenant should at last prove a Mistake, as there is no Reason to suppose) have as good Ground to hope in the *Mercy of God* for our Pardon and Forgiveness, as they can possibly have ; and so far are fully upon a Level with them ; and have beside (supposing our Religion to be true) the unshaken Foundation of His *covenanted Faithfulness and Justice* to rely upon, that He will *forgive us our Sins, and cleanse us from all Unrighteousness* : So that whereas their Salvation and Happiness for ever depends upon only one single Thread, ours is secured to us by a *threefold Cord*, which (as the wise Man expresses it) *is not quickly broken* ; and therefore in common Prudence and mere human Discretion, (if there were nothing else in it) the Christian Religion is as much preferable to that of Nature, (which is all that these Gentlemen, any of them, pretend to, and it were to be wished that they were hearty and sincere even in *that*) as it is more eligible to have three than only one Place of Refuge to fly to in case of Danger. And so much may



may suffice for an Answer to the Arguments, or pretended Arguments, which have been brought by this Writer against the Reasonableness of believing *any Salvation's being* procured for us, which was the *first* Thing proposed under this general Head. I now proceed to the Second, which was

2. *Secondly*, To answer what he has objected against the *particular Method of it* here asserted in the Text, *viz.* Its being procured by *no other than the Merit and Intercession of Jesus Christ*. And here he argues, 1<sup>st</sup>, That if Salvation be attainable by *Jesus Christ alone*, Mankind must have been left for above 4000 Years, (he means from the Time of Sin's entering into the World to our Saviour's Appearance) *without any Possibility* of attaining Salvation, which is so irreconcilable with the Notions that we have of the Goodness and other Attributes of the Divine Nature, as that it cannot be believed. — This Argument (which seems by his frequent Repetition of it to be another of his chief Favourites) is evidently founded upon a false Supposition, *viz.* *That the Sacrifice and Expiation of our Saviour's Blood could be of no Avail in the Sight of God toward his forgiving Man's Transgression, till the Time of his actual Appearance to the World*: For if that Sacrifice, in its Virtue and Efficacy, was applicable to all Men in all Ages of the World, as well those who had gone before, as those who followed after, the full Time of our Saviour's coming; then this Argument must fall to the Ground of Course, and Mankind will be so far from being excluded from Salvation *for above 4000 Years*, (as this Author argues) as that all will have been capable of it (tho' not by the Merit of their own Works, yet by the Virtue and Efficacy of this one great Sacrifice) from the Time of Sin's first Entrance into the World, down to this very Day. And that this is really the Case, appears evident both from the *Nature of such Sacrifices*, which were always looked upon as Propitiations and Attone-

ments for Sins that were *past*, as well as from the Authority of Holy Scripture, where (beside the Promise made immediately after the Fall, of *the Seed of the Woman's bruising the Serpent's Head*) the Sufferings and Propitiation of Christ, in the Merit of them, are represented as extending themselves *to all that have sinned*, to the *Sins of the World*, and of *all Mankind* without Exception; and the *Life purchas'd by Christ* is made as comprehensive of all, as the *Death* brought into the World by the Sin of our first Parents, and the Continuation of it in their Posterity afterwards, came alike upon all; And St. Paul expressly tells us, That tho' this

2 Tim. i. 9, 10. Grace is *now made manifest* by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to Light, through the Gospel; yet that it was *given us in Him before the World began*: And this, I suppose, may be the Reason of our Saviour's being described by *the*

Rev. xiii. 8. *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*. And accordingly this Doctrine, with very little Variation, has been unanimously received and acknowledged by all Christians, and our Saviour (as the Author of Salvation for us by the *Sacrifice of Himself*) is usually represented as the *Sun of Righteousness*, which diffuses its healing Influence both backward and forward, and warms and cherishes with its enlivening Rays the Generations past as well as those to come. If our Author *did not know this*, and *other Points* of our Religion, which he has basely misrepresented; he should be *taught* however to understand a Subject (especially one of that Importance) before he writes against it, and takes Occasion from his own Ignorance and Blundering to abuse and vilify it, lest he should fall under the Character of that worst Sort of Fools, *qui damnant quod non intelligunt*: If he *did know* this, and yet made such an Objection against Christianity in order to deceive some unwary People, and increase the Number of his own Disciples and Followers; he



he deserves a worse Name, which I do not care to give any Man in this Place: But really there appears to be so much of *the Fool* and of *something else* in this Author's Writings, as that it is hard to say which of the two Ingredients is predominant in his Constitution.

But he proceeds further, and argues, *2dly*, That if God intended that all Men should be saved by Jesus Christ alone, He would certainly, out of his Justice and Goodness, have brought all Men to the Knowledge of, and Belief in Him; or at least would have afforded them the Opportunities of it: Whereas it is plain, on the contrary, that not only those who lived *before His coming*, but a great Part of Mankind *now at this Day*, are left wholly destitute of any ordinary Means of such Knowledge and Belief; and consequently (if this Doctrine be allowed to be true) must be deprived of the very Means and Possibility of Salvation.—This Objection too, as well as the former, is plainly built upon a Supposition, which is far from being necessary, and which, I believe, upon Examination, will hardly be found to be true, *viz.* *That the Merits of our Saviour* for the Salvation of Mankind, (by Virtue of which He is styled the *Saviour of the World*) can be applied to those only, who have an *explicite Knowledge* of and Belief in Him; for it will by no Means follow upon any other Supposition, That if God will have all Men to be saved by Jesus Christ, and no other Way; therefore all must be brought to the Knowledge of and Faith in Him.

For the better understanding of this, give me leave to observe, that the whole Economy of our Salvation by Jesus Christ may be considered by us under two different Lights, either as an *Act of Grace and Favour only* on the Part of God; or, as a *Covenant* requiring such and such Conditions to be performed on Man's Part, upon his Performance of which God has promised and engaged Himself to shew him that Grace and Favour. Of these Conditions, (or *Means of obtaining Grace*) *Faith in, and confessing of, Jesus*

*Christ our Lord*, are undeniably some of the Principal and accordingly necessary to any Man's having a *legal and covenanted* Title to that Life and Salvation, which in that Covenant is stipulated by Jesus Christ. Those therefore who do not, or cannot arrive at the Performance of these, or other Conditions of the Covenant; cannot challenge indeed the *Faithfulness and Justice* of God, nor claim Life as *due* to them in Virtue of a Covenant which they are not admitted into; (and this, I suppose, may have been really the Meaning of those Divines, who deny *Salvation to all* indiscriminately who are out of the Pale of the Church, meaning *Covenanted Salvation*, it being their Business only to explain the Conditions of the *Christian Covenant*) but that therefore all those who are out of the Covenant, (*and unavoidably so*) are excluded from all Manner and Degree of *Salvation*, and cannot by any Endeavours in the Ways of Virtue and Religion, according to the best of their rational Powers, and the best Use of those Means and Opportunities which God has afforded them, be so much as proper Objects of His *uncovenanted Grace and Mercy*, and have their Sins forgiven them in Virtue of *that Sacrifice* which our Saviour made of Himself to take away Mens Sins: This is what I confess I can see no Necessity for, nor can I conceive such a Notion to do any Honour to the Merit of our Saviour's Sacrifice in the Sight of God; since every thing that is valued for its Goodness, and contributing to the Happiness of Mankind (and consequently *this Sacrifice*) is always to be esteemed either more or less valuable in Proportion to its greater or lesser Diffusiveness.

In short, how God will deal with those who have had the Gospel *Covenant* abundantly propos'd to them is sufficiently plain from the Revelation of His Will as contained in the New Testament; but what He will do out of His *uncovenanted Mercy*, in Consideration of Christ's Sacrifice, with those to whom He has not vouchsafed these Opportunities, neither I, nor  
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this Author, nor any other Person living has any Right to determine. These are *secret Things of God, which belong to God alone*; whereas *the Things that are revealed, only belong to us and our Children*. He may shew His Justice and Mercy to His Creatures in a thousand different Ways, and a thousand different Degrees, which are to us unknown, and *must always be so*, unless He please to reveal them to us; and *one cannot, without Horror*, (as this Author elsewhere expresses it) *think of impious Wretches breaking thro' all Rules of Modesty, to set up for Standards of Truth for God as well as Man*. We cannot find the Depth of the Heart of Man, (as it is well expressed in the Apocryphal Book of Judith) *neither can we perceive* Ch. viii. *the Things which He thinketh*; *how then can we search* ver. 14. *out God who has made all these Things, and know His Mind, or comprehend His Purpose?* Thus much however we are sure of in general, that the Judge of all the Earth, will do nothing but what is right by any of His Creatures; and though *His Ways may not be as our Ways, nor His Thoughts as our Thoughts*, yet we know that *He will judge the World in Righteousness*, (as the Psalmist expresses it) *and minister true Judgment unto the People*. Psal. ix. 8. In the mean time, it highly concerns all of us, to whom God has vouchsafed the Revelation of His Will, and afforded the Means of Grace and Opportunities of being admitted into the New Covenant, to take care that we do not, out of any corrupt Principle, *reject the Counsel of God against ourselves*; that there be not in any of us *an evil Heart of Unbelief to depart from the Living God*: For though we do not know (since he has nowhere told us) how God will deal with those who have not had these Advantages; yet we *do* know, both from the Reason of the Thing, and the express Testimony of Scripture, *That the Servant who did know his Master's Will*, (and the same is true of those who *might* and *ought* to have known it) *and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes*. Whatever may be the Condition of the Pa-

gan World, whose Ears were never reached by the Sound of the Gospel; their Condition certainly is in the highest Degree dangerous, who have *made themselves Pagans*, and renounce the Faith in, and Hope of Salvation by Jesus Christ, *even in the midst of Christianity.*

3dly, I shall take Notice only of one *Objection* (or rather *Cavil*) more, which I meet with in our Author against *this particular Method of Salvation*, by the Sacrifice and Intercession of Jesus Christ, *viz. That God never took any Delight at all in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices*, (which, in his declaiming Way, he calls *burning the Harmless and Innocent to save the Hurtful*;) and consequently much less could He be delighted with, and accept of, the Sacrifice of his own Son in our Nature; and that the Notion of applying ourselves to God by a Mediator, must denote, that *either God must be ignorant of something*, which this Mediator is to suggest to Him; or *that He must be unwilling to do something*, which this Mediator by His Importunities is to prevail upon Him to do against His Will; and so necessarily supposes God either to be *ignorant, or weak, or not so ready and willing* as He might be of Himself to do Good to His Creatures.—That God never took any Delight in those Things *for their own Sakes*, or upon account of any Virtue or Excellency in themselves; nay, that He expressed a downright Dislike to them, when they were either *offered with polluted Hands*, or Men depended too much upon their Virtue and Efficacy, or the like; I readily acknowledge: But that therefore He did not like them, as they were such proper Acknowledgements as Men were able to make of their *Dependance* upon Him, and *Thankfulness* to Him as the Giver and Bestower of all upon them; as *expressive* of their being sensible that they had transgressed His Laws, and deserved that Death in their own Persons, which was represented by the Death of some of those Creatures which He had given them; or as *Figures and Representations* of that one great Sacrifice of our blessed



bleſſed Saviour, which was *ordained* indeed before the Foundation of the World, but was to be *actually offered* in the Fulneſs of Time; or for ſeveral other Reaſons too long to be here inſiſted on: I ſay, that God could not be pleaſed with them for ſome of theſe or the like Reaſons, this I peremptorily deny; and I ſhall leave it with our Author (who takes upon himſelf as if he was thoroughly acquainted with the Divine Nature) to ſhew that God's Acceptance of them, upon theſe or ſome other Accounts, is inconfiſtent with any of thoſe Attributes which are acknowledged to belong to Him; or that Mankind's offering them, with thoſe or the like Views, was irreconcilable with natural Reaſon; or any of thoſe Relations wherein they ſtand to God, to other Men, or themſelves.

For what wiſe Reaſons God might chuſe this Method, of *giving up his own Son to be a Ransom for all*, and accepting of *Him only* to be an expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, and *without his Blood to grant Man no Remiſſion*, as He has now where told me, ſo (I readily confeſs) I do not preſume to know; but as He hath expreſſly aſſured me, that He has done it, ſo I can readily believe it without being able to aſſign the particular Reaſons for it. There are many things done by our *earthly Governours*, which we *muſt believe* and know to be true, for which yet we are not able to *aſſign any proper Reaſon*; but the Prince and thoſe who are immediately employed under him (we think it but Modeſty to ſuppoſe) can: And ſurely it is as reaſonable and fitting for us to ſuppoſe, that the Governour of the Univerſe may have great and weighty Reaſons for His Methods of Proceedings, though we, who are at a Diſtance and do not attend about His Throne, may not be able to account for them: And the contrary Practice ſeems to proceed from a ſort of Vanity, of affecting to have it thought *that we are of the Privy-Council of Heaven*, and conſequently that if ſuch or ſuch a thing had been done there, we muſt needs have known it, and been  
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let into the secret Reasons for which it was done.

As to his Objection against applying to God by an *Advocate or Intercessor*, it is so very trifling as hardly to deserve that any Notice should be taken of it. His Argument, if it proves any thing at all, proves a great deal more (I will not say *than what was intended by the Author*, but a great deal more) than it appears by him to have been produced to prove: For when Men apply themselves to God *immediately in their own Persons*, or in the *collective Body of a Congregation*, for the Relief of their Wants, or the Pardon of their Offences; when they *pour out their Complaints* (as the Psalmist speaks) *before Him, and tell him of their Troubles*; does not this as much suppose Him to be ignorant or weak, or not ready and willing of Himself to relieve them, as when they do the same Things by the *Interposal of another*? If *this* therefore be a sufficient Reason for Mens not applying to the Divine Majesty *by an Intercessor*, it is as much a Reason why they should make *no Prayers or Supplications at all to Him*, either publick or private, but should leave God to Himself to do as He thinks fit, for fear lest they should reflect on Him either as *not knowing their Wants*, or else *not willing and good-natur'd enough* to relieve them: or so *weak*, as to be prevailed upon by Mens Cries and Importunities to do otherwise than what He originally intended. Whether this Author intended his Argument to be carried thus far or not, I cannot determine; but from the Practices and Declarations of some who affect to be called Men of *Free-thinking*, I am apt to believe he did: For tho' Pag. 116. he tells us himself in another Place, *That it is the Voice of Nature that God should be publickly worshipped*; yet (as he best knows whether he duly attends that publick Worship or not; so) some of his Abettors both speak and act otherwise, and can by no Means approve of what they call (in their ingenious way of expressing themselves) *the serving of God in Crouds*.

However, when I see him, or any of his Disciples,  
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upon the want of any good Place, or fear of any Punishment, refusing to apply by *proper Persons* to his Majesty, for the obtaining of the one, or escaping of the other, for this *weighty Reason*, Left they should reflect upon *his Knowledge, his Wisdom, or Goodness of Nature, if they do not leave him wholly to himself, and the free Use of his own Benevolence*, I will promise to begin to think there is something in this Argument; but till that time I must beg leave to be of Opinion, and to tell these Gentlemen, that Prayers, and Supplications, and Cryings to God, whether publick or private, whether by ourselves, or by a Mediator, are *not intended to suggest* to Him any thing that He does not know, nor to *win upon his Weakness* by our Complaints or Importunities, nor denote or suppose *any want of Goodness in Him* (as this Author would have us imagine;) but are so many solemn Declarations and Acknowledgments of our *own continual Needs and Necessities*, of our Weakness and Inability to help and relieve ourselves; for which Reason we apply ourselves in the best Manner that we can, and (as the Psalmist expresses it) *get us to the Lord right humbly*, as an Acknowledgment on our Part of *his* being every where present to hear our Prayers, and always able and willing to relieve our Wants; and of *our* entire Dependance upon Him and Him alone for such Relief; and so they are proper Acts whereby to express *our Humility and Submission* to Almighty God, and to set forth *His Honour and Glory*, which by the Law of Nature and Reason itself, as well as by the Tenour of the *Christian Covenant*, considered as *Creatures* we are obliged to do to our *infinitely holy and good Creator*.

Thus have I gone through what I propos'd in this Discourse, and have endeavoured to explain and establish the Doctrine contained in the Words of my Text; and to answer the Cavils and Objections that have been brought against it, particularly by a late Writer, who has rendered himself considerable enough to be publickly taken notice of, for no other Reason that I am able to imagine, but for his more  
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than ordinary *Malice* against the Christian Religion, and some *little Arts* of *Disimulation* and *Disguise*, and giving a *plausible Turn* by some Words and Phrases to his false Reasonings, and thereby being qualified to lead Captive some silly People, who either cannot, or have not a *Mind* to see through his wicked Devices. I shall conclude all at present with a brief Exhortation to the younger Part of the Audience, *That they would* studiously endeavour (which is one great Part of the Design of their being *here*) to make themselves Masters of the Art of *clear Thinking* and *solid Reasoning*, that they may walk securely themselves, and serve as Guides to others, (if Providence should call them to that Office) in the Midst of a *crooked and perverse Generation* in which they live; that they may be able to discover the empty Fallacies and captious Artifices of some wicked and ungodly Men, whom in the present *Licentiousness of Thinking, Talking, Printing, and dispersing Books*, they may probably be too often encounter'd with in this World: *That they would not* however be too confident of their own Judgments, nor lean too much to their own Understandings; but advise with (especially in Matters of great Importance) and be directed by Men of maturer Age and greater Experience in the World, before they entirely give up their Assent: And above all, *That by* serious and earnest Prayer they would acknowledge their own Insufficiency, and call in the Aids and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to guide and direct them into the Knowledge of His Truth; that so they may not be as Children (to use the Apostle's Words) *tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Slight of Men and cunning Craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive*; but may grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the Salvation purchased by Him, *ill they come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, to the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ*; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.



